

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, HON. JUSTICE R. P. I. BOZIMO, OFR, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE REFRESHER COURSE FOR MAGISTRATES, HELD AT THE ANDREWS OTUTU OBASEKI AUDITORIUM OF NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, ON MONDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2015**

**PROTOCOLS:**

I am delighted to welcome you all to the 2017 Refresher Course for Magistrates, organised in further realization of the main objective of the National Judicial Institute, which is to train and retrain Judicial Officers in the superior and lower Courts in Nigeria, to promote efficiency and uniformity in the Administration of Justice.,

The 2017 Refresher Course for Magistrates is intended to enhance capacity building and further expose the Magistracy to best global practices and procedures, as this will, in no small measure, contribute significantly in updating the knowledge and skills of the Magistrates, in line with their responsibilities as judicial officers.

The theme “*Modernising Judicial Practices and Procedures in Law and Administration of Justice*” is of paramount importance

as it is premised on the need to inculcate and entrench modern judicial practices into the activities of the judicial arm of Government. Let me also acknowledge that, this is not just an exciting time, but also a very challenging and crucial time for the Nigerian Judiciary as we continue to build on our past successes, while recognizing that the challenges of today such as the economic, social, political and cyber sphere are more complicated than ever before. Therefore, as Magistrates, I urge you to be steadfast and resolute in carrying out your duties with high sense of professionalism and ethical standards; shunning all forms of corrupt practices that will damage the image and integrity of the Judiciary.

I know as a fact that it has not always been smooth sailing because most Courts at the grass root are not adequately equipped with suitable facilities that will enable them to function optimally. Be that as it may, it is instructive that under the able leadership of the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman, Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute, Hon. Justice W. S. N. Onnoghen, GCON, FNJI, the Judiciary through its various initiatives will continue to make incremental progress to better deliver an efficient and effective judicial system.

Furthermore, it is on record that the lower Courts, particularly the Magistracy, take up a high percentage of cases filed in Nigeria and this makes it imperative for the modernization of these Courts, as doing so will aid access to justice, quick resolution of cases and speedy dispensation of justice at the grass root. Apparently, some of the issues that would be tabled for presentation and discussion at this Refresher Course will illustrate the extent to which modern day judicial practices have been well fitted for dispute resolution and day to day activities in the Magistrate Courts.

On our part, the National Judicial Institute will continue to make every effort in identifying the problems impeding the administration of justice in our Courts, especially at the grass root, with a view to proffering solutions to those challenges.

Your Worships, we have carefully selected the following topics for discussion at this forum, believing that they will be impactful and beneficial to you all. These topics include:

1. Relevance and Admissibility of Evidence under the Evidence Act;

2. An Overview of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Systems;
3. Avoiding Trial Delays in Civil Proceedings;
4. Promoting Integrity and Transparency in the Administration of Justice;
5. Access to Justice and Protection of Rights of Citizens;
6. Trial in Magistrate Courts: Practice and Procedure;
7. Protecting the Rights of a Child: The Role of the Magistrate Court;
8. Health and Safety Issues for Judicial Officers

My Lords, Distinguished Guests and Participants, permit me to express my sincere appreciation to the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman, Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute, Hon. Justice W. S. N. Onnoghen, *GCON*, *FNJI*, for his guidance and support for all the programmes of the National Judicial Institute and most importantly for being a source of inspiration to us all.

Let me seize this opportunity to thank the Chairman, Education Committee of the Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute, Hon. Justice I. T. Muhammad, *JSC*, *CFR*, *FNJI*, and other members of the Committee for their desire and commitment

towards making the National Judicial Institute an enviable citadel of learning for all Judicial Officers and their support staff.

To the participants, we sincerely appreciate your being here with us and it is our expectation that the Refresher Course will stimulate a robust discussion and provide the needed impetus to cross fertilise ideas with your colleagues from the length and breadth of the Country. I urge you all to remain focused in order to make the best use of this unique opportunity for your personal development and for the greater good of the Judiciary and the Nigerian Nation.

Let me at this point, with all humility, invite the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman, Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute, Hon` Justice W. S. N. Onnoghen, *GCON, FNJI*, ably represented by Hon. Justice K. M. O. Kekere-Ekun, Justice of Supreme Court, to deliver his keynote address and declare the 2017 Refresher Course for Magistrates open.

Thank you and God bless us all.

**Hon. Justice R. P. I. Bozimo, *OFR***  
Administrator, NJI